

Easter Sunday
April 20, 2014

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed, alleluia; therefore let us keep the feast with the unleavened bread of purity and truth, alleluia, alleluia (Communion Antiphon, Easter Sunday, *The Roman Missal*).

On this holiest of days, we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the crowning truth of our faith in Christ. Our solemn celebration of Paschal Triduum began on Holy Thursday with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper during which we contemplated the gift and mystery of the Holy Eucharist in which Jesus gives Himself to us and remains with us in the most blessed Sacrament of the Altar. During these three days we have commemorated the Easter mystery in all its depth and detail. We know however, that each time we participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass the fullness of Good Friday, Easter and Pentecost is conveyed to us. Each time we participate in the sacred mysteries, the *Pascha Domini* (the Passover of the Lord), we die with Christ, we rise with Him and receive from Him the Spirit of Promise who transforms us and unites us to the Father in and through Christ (Fr. M. Louis Merton, *Seasons of Celebration*). The Mass is the Paschal Mystery. So we must always celebrate the Mass, any Mass *with the unleavened bread of purity and truth*; that is to say, with faith and devotion, reverence, gratitude and love.

Today's Mass, solemnly and joyfully celebrated is like every other Mass and yet, it is different in one unique and absolutely critical aspect. At every Mass, in the offering of the Sacrifice, the action of Christ makes present offering of Christ our Saviour on the Altar of the Cross. In the words of St. John Chrysostom, *We offer even now that which was then offered, which cannot be exhausted. This is done for an anamnesis of that which was then done, for 'Do this' said He', 'for the anamnesis of Me'. We do not offer a different sacrifice like the high-priest of old, but we offer the same. Or rather, we offer the anamnesis of the Sacrifice* (St. John Chrysostom in *Heb. hom.* 17:3; quoted in Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, p. 243). The unbroken, orthodox tradition of the Church does not deviate from the affirmation of this truth. At every Mass we are physically at the foot of the Cross and our Lord provides everyone who loves Him with an opportunity to be with Him on Calvary. The Psalmist prophesies of the Lord in His Passion: *I looked for pity, but there was none; and for comforters but I found none. They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink* (Ps. 69:20-21). In the Mass, in every Mass we are present with our Lady and our Lord's most faithful followers in the one offering made for the world's salvation. Our Lord Himself had prophesied: *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself* (Jn. 12:32). In Himself our Lord brings to perfection all mysteries, so that there is one sacrifice and also one kingdom gathered from all peoples (Cf. Pope St. Leo the Great, *Sermo 8 de Passione Domini*). Through the ages, ours included, this prophecy continues to be fulfilled. This is the cosmic breadth of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Yet, as vast as this is, there is an intimate and personal quality to this Sacrifice, whose fruit is received in Holy Communion, the Eucharistic Banquet. There is a beautiful antiphon composed by St. Thomas Aquinas which expresses the profound mystery that takes place in the Eucharistic miracle of the Mass: *O Sacred Banquet in which Christ is received: the memory of His Passion is recalled; the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory to us is given. Alleluia!* Yes, this takes place at every Mass. Our Lord gives to each one of us the privilege of being united with Him in His offering to the Father. He gives us the opportunity to adore and thank Him for the gift of salvation; and in turn, transformed into His very likeness we proclaim the joy of the Gospel, the joy of salvation to the whole world.

On this holy day we celebrate our Lord's glorious resurrection; that because our Lord *humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross...God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth* (Phil. 2: 8-10). His resurrection is a real event, with manifestations recorded for us in the Gospels. And so the Mystery of Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection reveals God to us as humble and triumphant – humbled even unto death, death on a cross, yet triumphant over sin and death. God is both humble and triumphant. All of us will in this sacred celebration soon renew our baptismal promises. We do this once a year. Our Lenten penance has been a preparation for this act of faith. In rejecting sin and professing our faith in the Triune God, we will pledge our willingness to rise above our sins and failings, our weaknesses and to live in imitation of Jesus who poured Himself out for us on the Cross.

How is this Mass different? In a few moments we will all renew our baptismal promises. Our Lenten penance and sacrifices have been a preparation for this moment of renewed commitment. For some of us, long ago, the waters of baptism were poured upon us. As these living waters were poured, God poured Himself into our souls. Our hearts tell us that it is only in pouring ourselves out for others, our families, our loved ones, and even the least of our brothers and sisters that we are truly fulfilled. Today, all of us, young and old, renew our baptismal promises, certain in the knowledge that *to be in Christ is to be anew creation* (2 Cor. 5:17). The renewal of our spirits in the ever-present grace of the Resurrection assures us of a continual renewal of our lives, provided we endeavor truly *to be in Christ* with integrity, and a humble commitment to a life of Christian discipleship. Authentic Christian life means a life of intense charity and self-giving both in prayer and good works. Authentic Christian life is a Eucharistic life because the Eucharist makes present God's love poured out for us on the Cross and the victory of life over death and of love over hatred.

As we begin the fifty days of Easter, may our celebration of the Paschal mysteries make us always conscious of the power of Christ's resurrection at work in our lives. May this power raise us up spiritually. May it lead us to pour ourselves out in love, in service; generously and in humility. This alone is a life worthy of God, who calls into His kingdom and glory (1Thes. 2:12). It is no less God's own life. May our lives truly be *hidden with Christ in God* (Col. 3:3).

All of us who serve this parish, the Fathers, our Deacon Joseph wish you and your families a Blessed and Happy Easter with the assurance of our prayers and grateful affection for all your kindness to us.

O sacrum convivium in quo Christus sumitur. Recolitur memoria passionis eius: mens impetitur gratia: et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur. Alleluia! (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rB7cBhjgaoA>)